

Roundtable Discussion on the International Movement of Horses

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Dr. John Bourke, (Australia),
Dr. Karen James (USDA),
Dr. Tremayne Toms (South Africa),
Dr. Clifford Irvine (New Zealand),
Dr. Roland Devolz (France),
Dr. Marie O'Connor (Ireland), and
Dr. Andrew Higgins (UK)**

ABRAHAM If you would, Dr. James, start off by commenting on what Andrew said, with particular reference to the States.

JAMES OK. First of all, Andrew did contact the USDA for information. That might be one reason why he didn't discuss this too much. We decided, why should we give someone from another country information on our import requirements when, in fact, I was going to be here, so we didn't give him any information at all (laughter). Whatever information he had he got last evening or this morning from myself. I think all of you are familiar, or at least the majority of you are familiar, with the movement of horses. USDA is a regulatory agency. We are not here to keep horses from racing or keep them from participating. We're here to regulate the horse industry. We do what you want us to do. We didn't just pick diseases out of the sky and say, this is what we want to regulate or keep out of our country. But in fact the diseases important to you have been presented to us years and years ago and are constantly being presented to us today. As far as regulating horses is concerned, I've dealt with a number of foreign officials on regulations governing the international movement of horses, trying to streamline them. The main group that we might possibly be able to do something with is the Thoroughbred industry,

because they tend to regulate their horses and are concerned more with the diseases of interest than a lot of other groups. I'm not saying that they don't have an interest, but it's mainly the Thoroughbred population that we deal with. As far as the diseases are concerned, EIA, dourine, glanders, and piroplasmiasis, those are the main ones of concern. Then there's African Horse Sickness and VEE, and CEM; we can't forget that one. It perplexes me that, again, we're here for the horse industry and you want us to regulate it, but when there is a horse that wants to come in to race, or one of our horses is going some where, nine times out of ten you don't want us to regulate it and you want us to give you a waiver for something. What the horse industry needs to decide is what diseases you are definitely interested in, which ones are a concern to you, and which ones you want us to regulate. If you're no longer concerned with CEM, then let us know; we can get out of the regulatory aspect of that; you can do it yourself; you can do it interstate. If you are no longer interested and you don't think piroplasmiasis is much of a problem to the horse industry, and you do not want it to be regulated, or you want horses from other countries where piroplasmiasis exists to come in and race with no restrictions, then let us know. But until then, we do have regulations. Now, we sort of work with competition horses that are coming from countries in which there's a particular disease, like piroplasmiasis. There's a lot of politics involved, which you know about. If a horse comes into the US that we know is a known piro animal, we can work out situations that have that animal isolated and quarantined in order to compete and get back out of the country, but it has a lot to do with us and our federal regulations and also the state that it's going into and the state regulations, what period of time, the year, the vector season, and if that vector, in fact, is in that

state, or not in that state. We try to work with you on the movement of horses. We understand the movement of horses, understand that they're constantly going back and forth, and we don't want to put any major restrictions on them that we don't need to. We're working with the Olympics now for the horses going over to Spain to allow them to go to Spain and compete. They have the option of coming back and going into New York and doing the 60 day quarantine. There's no way of getting over that if you come directly from Spain. But, some of them don't want to tie them up because the horses will get out of condition, etc., so therefore, we've worked out a way that they can go to another European country for at least 60 days and they can exercise or do whatever you want them to do to keep them in shape. After that time they can come back to the US and do what we call the 3 day quarantine where they come into the quarantine for approximately 3 days and if they're negative for the four diseases that we're required to test them for, they can go wherever they want to. Also, the USDA is concerned about when these animals decide to go to a European country for 60 days; that means be out of an African Horse Sickness country for 60 days. Most European countries are CEM infected. We've worked with the horse industry and also Dr. Devolz, in reference to France, concerning the horses going over there and they're allowing horses to stay 90 days over there; and they would check them periodically. So right now, our regulations require only what we call a racing re-entry permit; only 60 days to go over to a country and back without being tested for CEM. We might be able to change it to 90 days, but the 60 day time is sufficient. It's going to take a few days to come back and we understand that, so we're trying to work with you. But you have to work with the USDA, also. I'm on the phone constantly listening to people and all they do is complain about us and our quarantine facilities. Also, there've been numerous articles about USDA quarantine and how bad it is. But we try to work with you. If you want a special feed, we try to work with you, but you've got to work with us, too.

ABRAHAM You did say that you've been prepared to let horses come back from Spain if they've

been to another country, another European country for 60 days.

JAMES Our requirements are they have not been in an African Horse Sickness country for 60 days. So that's always been there; that's nothing new. What we are doing is allowing you to go into an African Horse Sickness free country and come back without meeting the CEM requirements.

ABRAHAM Right, well of course, the EEC situation may possibly change this.

JAMES I'm familiar with this situation and we're working on that. The EEC situation sort of put a hamper on the meeting I was in with some of the other veterinarians concerning the streamlining of regulations on movement of competition horses moving in and out of the US. Because you threw that little factor in there we have to reassess everything now.

ABRAHAM Well, since that's been brought up, perhaps we could ask Maire (O'Connor) to tell us about the update in the European situation.

O'CONNOR I've just discovered, Brian, I'm not fully up-to-date, actually.

ABRAHAM You've just discovered you're not fully up-to-date?

O'CONNOR Dr. Devolz is going to have to do this because I've just discovered that I'm not fully up-to-date. Since the first agenda of the movement within the European community of horses, rules governing transport haven't yet been worked out, but should be in vogue by the first of July. As far as animal health conditions are concerned, the member states are stimulated to encourage intercommunity trade. I didn't know there was a problem with intercommunity trade in horses; certainly not in competition horses. The horse has to be accompanied by an identification document and health certificate. The horse is examined on the farm of origin and there is a health certificate. In situations where you have a border situation as in my own country, and I wanted to go hunting with my horse in Northern Ireland and I lived near the border, there are arrangements for that situation so you wouldn't

have to get a health cert every time you wanted to cross the border. The European Commission has accepted also, and will examine, programs presented by member states as regards codes of practice. They weren't called codes of practice initially, but the code of practice between Ireland, England and France has worked very effectively in the elimination of various diseases. That's really all I have to say. As regards the importation from foreign countries I understood that the EEC and their delegations have to visit third countries to assess them as regards to health standards and control measures. I don't know if that has actually been carried out yet, but Roland Devolz might be able to help you a little further on that.

ABRAHAM Yes, I was going to suggest that Roland (Devolz) perhaps, came in next and supplement anything you had to say. Would you like to do that, Roland?

DEVOLZ Look now then, there is some definition which I may make. We are interested in competition horses and we see that to clarify the problem, first, meat horses should only travel in the form of carcasses, and if you do that, you solve most of the problems. You see, because carcass inspection is easy to do. And you solve all the welfare problems, so it's our policy first (you can laugh about it) -- but the meat horse complicates all the life of the industry. Nobody can object to that. Secondly, there should be a difference between contagious disease and non-contagious disease. Part of the problem is that because there is the same regulation for African Horse Sickness which is a kind of disease and for piroplasmiasis and for other things; and they are not contagious the same way. Anyhow, to come back to the EEC. First, inside Europe there is free movement. If the USDA considers that Spain is infected, all of the EEC countries are infected. That's it. The logic of USDA should declare all EEC countries infected, and as within three months, there will be the same regulation between EEC and extra countries -- all Europe is infected. That's it. From third countries there will be five types of certificates and third countries should be allowed to import horses. Again, it's only for competition horses fitted with a passport. We are not interested in the other

ones. Because other ones being a neighbor to be identified; I don't see how you can issue a vet certificate without identification.

ABRAHAM Thank you very much. Unfortunately, we can't resurrect horses yet, so, if you transport them as carcasses they don't race very well. That presents us with a bit of a problem. John Bourke, would you like to tell us what's happening down under?

BOURKE We just poured a little bit of oil on troubled waters, I think. As far as Australia is concerned, just dealing with the Olympic Games horses, I understand that the Australian authorities have a similar sort of requirement to you, in that if horses are resident for 60 days in a country from which we will accept horses, with the last 30 days under surveillance quarantine, and 14 days quarantine on arrival in Australia, there are no problems at all. That leads me to the countries from which Australia will currently accept horses. Under those conditions, England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, France, more recently Norway and Sweden, and hopefully, in the not too distant future, Germany, Canada between the months of the first of December and the thirty-first of March, North American horses, and any horse from anywhere that is a resident for 60 days in any one of those countries, is allowed to come into Australia provided they have 60 days residence, last 30 days surveillance quarantine, vaccinations against Equine Influenza and Equine Encephalomyelitis, and negative tests for Vesicular Stomatitis, Babesiosis, Equine Viral Arteritis, and Equine Infectious Anemia. There was until recently relatively free movement of horses between Australia and New Zealand, but now there is some restriction because of the fact that we have obtained from New Zealand American horses that are serologically positive for Equine Viral Arteritis. As far as the exotic diseases in Australia are concerned, we see Equine Herpes Virus EHVI and EHV4 --the abortogenic and respiratory strains -- but the paralytic strain has not been recognized. Equine Infectious Anemia is endemic in a certain restricted area in Australia, but it doesn't appear to cause many problems because there aren't too many horses there. There is also serological evidence of the presence of Equine Viral Arteritis

in American Standardbred horses imported into Australia by the back door, through New Zealand. (I'm not being deliberately provocative.) Babesiosis and piroplasmosis have been recognized in imported horses but there's been no evidence of any spread. There was some rumor that we had serological evidence of the presence of Potomac Horse Fever (I think last year), but I don't think that came to anything. I think we sent the samples to you people (USDA). We're fortunate in Australia and New Zealand, I suppose, in that we are isolated and our horse populations in the last century and the early years of this century grew up through the importation of horses that had to come by ship, (of course by sailing ship). It was a long trip, and we were kept free of a lot of diseases. I would agree with the principal speaker that the international movement of horses has the potential to cause a lot of problems and hopefully effective immunizations against equine influenza will keep equine influenza out of Australia. Nevertheless, one expects that it could well happen. As far as international movement of horses for particular events into Australia is concerned, there has been run in Sydney in recent years an international horse race where horses were permitted to enter under special license. There was a three day international horse event run in South Australia two or three years ago where special conditions were made to allow horses to enter Australia for these events under special license. But none the less, they were only permitted to come from the countries that we normally permit horses to come from, and the conditions, if anything, were more strict than the conditions that are allowed for the normal importation of horses.

DEVOLZ Seriously, I've sent a lot of horses to Australia. They were always isolated somewhere. There was no difference. I mean, they galloped on the same race tracks as other horses, but one was galloped in the morning and the other one in the afternoon. What does that mean? There's always a back door in the system and most of the regulations in my mind comes from the economic point of view.

BOURKE Well that's true and really quite honestly because of the cost of doing that and because of the cost of importing horses in a special charter

flight, we may have seen the last international horse race in Australia.

ABRAHAM Thank you, John. Anything else to add?

BOURKE I don't think so.

ABRAHAM Well, you've just accused Cliff (Irvine) of importing his trotters into your country by the back door, so, perhaps he can explain to us how he does it?

DEVOLZ You know that if you want to import positive EVA horse into the tripartide you just ship them to Sweden. And it works.

ABRAHAM There are all sorts of back doors, this is part of the problem.

DEVOLZ Yes. Everybody says that if you monitor the movement of horses and you ship a lot of horses from the tripartide, then we are assuming a lot and there is no problem. Just knowing what you do and how it should be done.

IRVINE New Zealand is rather like Australia in having been isolated for many years. Horses came by ship, which took about 6 weeks or so, and the ones that survived were so healthy that they couldn't possibly have had anything. And, we've been even a little bit luckier than Australia in that we don't have any tropical areas in New Zealand (it's very temperate) and consequently, diseases that depend on vectors like Infectious Equine Anemia have never gotten into New Zealand from Australia, though Australians keep sending horses across to us. Also, we never got Contagious Equine Metritis, for whatever reason we aren't sure. Possibly our Department of Agriculture is very smart or we're very lucky, but we don't seem to have gotten even those things that Australia would like to export to us. We haven't gotten them, and we've, in return, done our best to keep Australia free of diseases. But they do like our trotters, and they have to upgrade their stock occasionally, so they have to get horses from New Zealand. It's been their fortune to import horses from New Zealand that have Equine Viral Arteritis. But we got that from the US a few years ago. Interestingly, we've

probably had Equine Viral Arteritis for 20 years. There's never been a single horse that's been sick with symptoms that related to Equine Viral Arteritis as far as we're concerned. Now we know what horses have got EVA, and they don't just have antibodies, but they're shedders of the virus; they're actively infected. They've never had any record of sickness. EVA, as it exists in New Zealand, is not a serious disease at all. In fact, it's not a disease at all. I don't want to add any more. John (Bourke) has very ably discussed the position in the antipodies. I couldn't add anything more to that. As far as the Olympic Games are concerned, we have exactly the same requirements as Australia; they probably got them from us. Thank you.

ABRAHAM Tremayne (Toms) is the last one on this list. Tremayne, would you like to tell us about how you're going stop giving African Horse Sickness to the rest of the world?

TOMS Obviously African Horse Sickness is the actual biggest problem in the world. We live with it and we live with it quite well. I think in the last year or two I've possibly seen one or two cases. The most important thing about it is that it doesn't effect horses until the summer rains, and in the southern continent where we get frost. Once we've had a decent frost we don't get horse sickness again until the following summer rains. In other words, we have about 9 months a year where there is no horse sickness. Furthermore, we have a very good vaccine and although there are many strains of horse sickness, I think the total number is 11, we only have 8 strains in our vaccine. Every now and then a new strain seems to be brought south, perhaps by migrating birds or something like that. So we do get the odd case, although there is somewhat of a cross immunity between strains. Although a new strain might come down and cause sickness among a few horses, it doesn't create much of a problem if everything has been vaccinated. And we vaccinate regularly every year, usually in September, although you can vaccinate any time you like. The other thing is that, the reason why it only causes trouble after the summer rains is because the vector is not active until the summer rains. It seems to remain, for some reason or other, in warm areas, mongoose holes, or

something like that, or anywhere in the country. You find the active *Culicoides*, which is the vector, rarely causing trouble in January. The other thing about horse sickness I haven't heard mentioned anywhere is that the vector does not fly under roofs. So if an animal is stabled through the dangerous period of the year -- in fact, those few months I've mentioned -- they simply do not seem to get horse sickness. Also, most of them don't vaccinate their horses because they have to be put out of work for three weeks after a vaccination. So, although the horses go out very early in the morning -- four or five in the morning -- even during the horse sickness period, when everything is active, because the horses are moving, the vector doesn't seem to have a chance to get to bite the horse to transmit the disease, so we don't get a problem there either. I think during the last year we had about 6 horses in training affected with horse sickness. And these were unvaccinated horses, and unfortunately, they died because nearly everything that gets horse sickness dies. But, obviously, it's not something we want anybody else to get. But it is our view that the rest of the world pays far more attention to this disease than they need. The other thing about it is our experts say that if you go beyond the latitude of 35 degrees, it's unlikely to last more than a year or two, even if you do get an endemic situation, because the vector is simply incapable of maintaining the infection. So, although you might have the vectors there after two or three generations, they are no longer going to be infective. Then we have one very new thing which perhaps some of you will know about. And that is the new ELISA tests that are now able to test for a live and dead virus by testing for antigen, which means that you can test a positive case of horse sickness within about 24 hr, rather than having to isolate virus and spend 14 days waiting to get a result. And I think that this is a major breakthrough. And hopefully, from our point of view, this is going to change the whole horse sickness situation. I think that covers most of it.

ABRAHAM Thank you very much. Of course, African Horse Sickness is one of these things which nobody who hasn't got it wants to have and with the change in the climate which appears to be effecting us, the vector may well of course be

able to exist in places where it didn't before and this obviously is a worry. Anyway, I now throw it open to the meeting. Has anybody got any comments to make, either on the main paper or on any of the comments that have been made since?

DEVOLZ I just want to say two things. First, and right in the middle of the epidemic in Spain, when there was that zone closed, there was a corridor in Barcelona. Barcelona is the Olympic Village, and somebody right from the center took his horses, went to Barcelona through the corridor and came back and nothing happened. That's the best demonstration for me that there is no danger in Barcelona. And another thing, for the ELISA test, I've been exporting from France two horses, one from the north of France, one from the east of France to Italy, and they've been detected positive by the Italians using the ELISA test.

TOMS I would just like to add the following. It must be remembered all the time that horse sickness is not a contagious disease. It is a disease which can only be transmitted by either the vector or mechanical means.

JAMES Since a couple of people were picking on the US in reference to EVA, and in particular the US giving or transmitting EVA to Australia by way of New Zealand, I would mention that we don't have a program for it. If it's a major problem for the horse industry, then you need to let us know that it is a problem and we need to start looking at it to regulate it. But you have to think about the economic aspects of regulating horses in the US going back and forth because if they go out and you want us to regulate it and they come in and they're positive, we've got a problem. The other situation, which is also an economics problem, is what Dr. Devolz was saying. USDA's logic is that we don't regionalize for any particular disease. It's more that if a country has it, then we consider that country to be infected, like for instance, Spain. All of Spain has it, not the area that's isolated and quarantined - but all of Spain. So if you talk about opening up the EEC and their borders, then yes, basically all of the EEC would be considered for African Horse Sickness. That

would be an economic nightmare for everybody. If you don't want horses going to Europe and competing, or European horses coming to the US, then you can push for us to keep it the way it is. There is a concern about your horses, or our horses, going over and coming back and doing the 60 days cause that's basically what it would be. Again, we're a regulatory agency but we use a little bit of common sense, too. And there's a lot of politics and economics involved in it, which you all know. USDA might possibly have to think about regionalizing in reference to the type of disease it is, the way it is transmitted, and how we can work with it. We deal with regionalization periodically with cattle and bluetongue on this side and a lot of times we want other countries to accept our regionalization. We need to start looking at that, but it goes a little bit higher than me. Basically, I doubt if we're going to allow all of Europe to be considered African Horse Sickness infected. I think we'd get letters from Congressmen and Senators as soon as we did that.

TOMS Can I just ask why the EEC didn't maintain the whole of Spain to be infected and just basically stop movement of horses to and from Spain?

DEVOLZ Just because of being realistic. There's no wall there between France and Spain. There are three parts. In the middle there are mountains, and on the right side -- both sides of the border -- it's not French and Spanish, it's Basques. On the other side, it's Chatelaines. And there has always been free movement despite the border, the political border. The Chatelaines and the Basques don't want to know that there is a Spanish government and a French government. It's moving like that. So it was better to isolate the place where the problem was -- which did work -- than to say Spain was infected, the border is closed, and everybody's passing through.

ABRAHAM Trust the French to be pragmatic.

DEVOLZ Another example of pragmatic. All during the time of the epidemic, horses were shipped from Spain to the USA through a quarantine system. And then we in the tripartite

were observing fully vaccinated horses against African Horse Sickness and nobody would see that. Everybody would just say 'you go' and I'm there, and I'm seeing nothing.

ABRAHAM Anybody else got any comments they would like to make? Andrew Higgins, have you got anything to add to this. You're a great expert on the EEC.

HIGGINS Roland said I've got some funny stories. The funniest story of all was sitting on a working party with Karen James and Roland Devolz looking at the international movement of horses. It was an amusing year as you can imagine. We (the International Conference of Racing Authorities) perceived there was a problem, particularly in horses going from Europe to the States for racing. For example, after horses arrived in the United States, blood samples had to be flown up to Ames, Iowa for testing. That resulted sometimes in delays of several days, particularly if the plane happened to arrive on Friday afternoon. Such delays cause a lot of difficulties and some trainers thought that inequitable racing conditions were being created as a result, because the horses weren't allowed to remain in training. So our Working Group was set up and we sat for a year. Karen (James) made a very constructive input into this working party and we much appreciated her involvement. The recommendations went to the ICRA meeting in October last year and one of these was to try and press the USDA to look again at pre-export testing. I know it's a contentious issue, but is something which I know Karen and her colleagues have taken on board and they are looking at now. It may mean earmarking nominated laboratories in specific countries to do the tests. I don't share Andrew Dalglish's view that there's any justification for not accepting laboratories in certain specified countries who are well capable of doing these tests. In fact the Australian government has recently adopted pre-export testing themselves. We hope USDA will follow in due course. To reinforce something Roland said a few minutes ago, good health certification and identification documentation are absolutely essential and we've got to move towards a standard approach. A lot of things are happening in the EEC at the moment; it's

complicated, it's complex, it's difficult, a lot of politics is involved, a lot of negotiation is involved. Things are not always clear, but it's becoming clearer all the time. And within the next few weeks the EEC will be publishing its regulations with regard to the importation of horses into the EEC from third countries, which will be categorized into five groups. The USA, Canada, and Jamaica all fall into one of those particular categories. These regulations will apply for the Olympics.

ABRAHAM Would anybody else like to comment? Well, all I have to do now is thank the main speaker and indeed everybody else who's contributed. It's a very, very complex business as we all know. It's certainly not something which we can resolve tonight here, and I have little doubt that at future meetings of this organization we shall return to this subject and, indeed, I think we ought to.